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**For more information contact:**  
Charla Haley  
Public Information Specialist  
(801) 538-6710 (O)  
(801) 230-5927 (C)

After hours/weekend on call (801) 209-2591

## **Public Comment Welcome on Community Measures to Prevent Deaths During a Pandemic**

(SALT LAKE CITY) –The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) has posted information on its Web site outlining recommendations that may be implemented during an influenza pandemic. The issue has been studied and debated by many over the past year and the UDOH believes these steps will be important to reduce the number of deaths in Utah.

A study published in the August 8th issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* looked at public records from the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic. That study demonstrated that school closures and other community strategies were the most effective in reducing the possibility of spreading disease between people during an epidemic. “Communities that were most successful in warding off deaths during the 1918 pandemic quickly enacted a number of measures,” according to Dr. Robert Rolfs, Utah State Epidemiologist. “These strategies are particularly important because the intervention most likely to provide the best protection against pandemic influenza, a vaccine, will most likely not be available at the beginning of the outbreak,” adds Dr. Rolfs.

Dr. Rolfs says, “In order for the restrictions to be most effective, we’ll have to rely on the public’s willingness to make some pretty substantial changes in day-to-day life. We hope that people will look at the restrictions, learn about what they’ll need to do during the next pandemic, and tell us if we need to make any changes for this plan to work.” To read and make comments on the recommendations, please visit

<http://pandemicflu.utah.gov/>.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*

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